



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, Dr. Marat Tazhin

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the (Special) Permanent Council, Vienna
April 30, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

Welcome to the Permanent Council, Mr. Foreign Minister. It is a pleasure to have you here today, and to listen to your government's plans for democratic reforms in Kazakhstan.

The United States welcomes the Government of Kazakhstan's expressed interest in moving forward with implementation of political reform. The package of measures you have laid out is a positive step in the right direction. We believe these actions should benefit Kazakhstan, whether it be through increased diversity of the political spectrum or a stable environment for independent media. The U.S. therefore welcomes both the spirit and the substance of these measures. But we also feel compelled to ask when Kazakhstan will address the structural issues which restrict basic freedoms and limit the ability of Kazakhstan's citizens to influence their government.

Last August, when our colleague Ambassador Aliyev was Deputy Foreign Minister, he spoke to Kazakhstan's State Democratization Commission about the need to adopt a new electoral law, a law on local self-government, and to simplify the party registration procedure. These, along with reform of the law on media, are exactly the kind of structural issues where we would welcome increased focus and action by the Government of Kazakhstan. We wish to reiterate once again that the Government of the United States continues to stand ready to provide assistance in this regard. Above all, concrete implementation of democratic reforms – change that is experienced on the ground – is the key.

Since 2003, the United States has welcomed the candidacy of Kazakhstan to chair the OSCE. I am not here today to repeat once again the points that have been made up at the highest level by our governments and around this table. I think these points have been made almost ad nauseam. So I say this: Let there be no doubt about it: the United States is "for" Kazakhstan. We are "for" continued reform in Kazakhstan and desire to see concrete progress on the reforms that have been promised. We are "for" a Kazakhstan that demonstrates through its actions that it is ready and able to lead the Central Asian region in fulfillment of OSCE commitments. We are also "for" the conclusion of the OSCE ministerial Council in Brussels last December that any country applying for the Chairmanship of the OSCE must exemplify the principles of the Organization. Regarding the last point, we will continue to encourage the Government of Kazakhstan to demonstrate, through implementation of substantive reforms, that it is "for" the commitments, norms and values upon which the OSCE is based.

Thank you. Mr. Chairman.